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SUBJECT: SCOTLAND: AMBASSADOR ENGAGES WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

¶1. (U) Summary. The Ambassador engaged with a wide variety of policy, civic, business, and Muslim communities during his first official visit to Scotland, October 29-30. Prominent Scottish Muslim leaders told the Ambassador during a roundtable discussion that the Muslim community in the UK and worldwide is "looking for proof that American officials are listening" to the concerns of the Muslim community and advocated a balanced USG approach to peace in the Middle East and in Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Ambassador explained the Obama Administration's approach to foreign policy, climate change, global economic recovery, and healthcare to an audience of academics, civic leaders, and policy-makers. Along with Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond, the Ambassador launched the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and USG Fellows Alumni Group. The Ambassador also addressed the Scottish North American Business Council (SNABC) and reaffirmed strong U.S. ties and engagement with the UK and Scotland in his meetings with the Lord Provosts of Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament. End summary.

Meeting Scotland's Muslim Leadership

¶2. (U) At the Al-Meezan Islamic Women's Cultural Center in Glasgow, leaders from Scotland's predominately South Asian Muslim community told the Ambassador on October 30 that the Muslim community in the UK and worldwide is "looking for proof that the American government is listening" to the concerns of the Muslim community, especially with regard to the sanctity of Muslim life in the face of USG military action in the Muslim world. They stressed the importance of dialogue and encouraging terrorists to re-join their communities peacefully and suggested that the labeling of terrorist organizations did not support mediated resolutions. On foreign policy, they argued that the USG needs to move away from a "U.S.-centric view of the world" and should support a more balanced approach to peace in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan. They specifically noted that strong U.S. political and military support for Israel appeared to be incompatible with the firm USG stance against Israeli settlements, providing little incentive for Israel to change its current policy. The participants warmly welcomed the Obama Administration's efforts to reach out to Muslims around the world and called him, "the best hope for peace." They appreciated the Ambassador's willingness to engage with them and agreed to provide, per the Ambassador's request, suggestions on what the U.S. can do to better engage with the Muslim communities to tackle tough problems such as extremism.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh

¶3. (U) To an audience of academics, civic leaders, and policy-makers at the Royal Society of Edinburgh on October 29, the Ambassador explained the Obama Administration's approach to foreign policy, climate change, global economic

recovery, and healthcare. In follow-up questions, the audience queried the Ambassador on the specifics of the Obama Administration's developing policies on Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, among other topics. Participants also responded positively to the Ambassador's assurances that Scotland remained very important to the USG, especially given the intertwined economies and cultures, in the wake of the Scottish decision to release convicted Pan Am 103 bomber Abdel Basset al-Megrahi.

Maintain the Strong IVLP Connection

¶14. (U) Along with Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond, the Ambassador launched the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and USG Fellows Alumni Group on October 29, designed to provide a networking group for former recipients of USG-sponsored programs. Both the First Minister and the Ambassador appreciated the importance of strong government as well as people-to-people connections and noted the significant contributions the USG programs had made to Scotland.

Civic, Local, and Business Leaders Welcome USG Engagement

¶15. (U) The Lord Provosts of Edinburgh and Glasgow, Presiding Officer Alex Fergusson of the Scottish Parliament, and the Scottish North American Business Council (SNABC) all welcomed strong and continued USG engagement in Scotland. The Lord Provosts heralded at receptions the long history of deep economic and cultural ties between the U.S. and Scotland and

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welcomed the Ambassador's unequivocal message of support for their continuance. At an SNABC working lunch, SNABC Chairman Iain McMillan and Glasgow Lord Provost Bob Winter highlighted the importance of the U.S. to Scotland's economy and appreciated the Ambassador's efforts to further economic ties in both directions, especially for Scotland's green energy sector businesses.

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